



Emergency Department Safer Nursing Care Tool (ED SNCT)

The National Quality Board has set the expectation that to ensure safe, effective, caring, responsive and well led care on a sustainable basis, trusts will employ the right staff with the right skills in the right place and at the right time. NHS provider boards hold individual and collective responsibility for making judgements about staffing and the delivery of safe, effective, compassionate and responsive care within available resources (NQB, 2016).

The Emergency Department Safer Nursing Care Tool (ED SNCT) is an adaptation of the original Safer Nursing Care Tool, that has been developed to help NHS hospitals in England measure patient acuity and/or dependency to inform evidence-based decision making on staffing in the Emergency Department. The tool will also offer nurses a reliable method against which to deliver evidence-based workforce plans to support existing services or the development of new services. This is in line with NHS England's National Quality Board expectation for staff to use evidence based tools, alongside professional judgement and patient outcomes to inform decisions regarding staffing establishments.

Ensuring safe, sustainable and productive staffing

The Emergency Department Safer Nursing Care Tool (ED SNCT) is:

- Able to help staff measure patient acuity and dependency to inform evidence-based decision making on staffing and workforce.
- Appropriate for use in all emergency departments, adults, childrens and Adult/Childrens, including those with major trauma centres as well as district general hospitals.
- Used in conjunction with quality indicators including patient outcome measures, process measures, patient and staff experience and staffing metrics.

The ED SNCT also provides:

- Establishment set by Annual Attendance as well as Acuity and Dependency.
- Includes resource requirements for enhanced Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) care needs
- Identifies additional staffing for patients requiring care for 12 hours or more in emergency departments.
- A deployment arm showing the hourly staffing requirement aligned to the acuity & dependency.

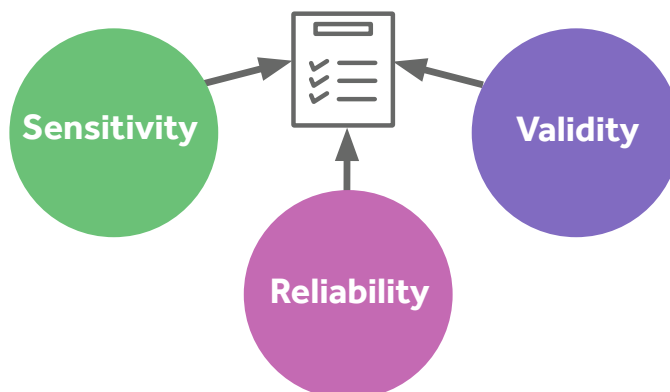
Benefits of the Emergency Department SNCT (ED SNCT)

- Demonstrates how acuity and dependency are measured in emergency department settings.
- Ensures that accurate data can be collected.
- Uses staffing multipliers to support professional judgement in reviewing and setting nursing establishments.

The development process

The ED SNCT was developed and validated by NHS emergency department experts. This included large acute trusts, including those with major trauma centres, and district general hospitals caring for adults only or adults and children. It is therefore suitable for determining nurse staffing establishments for all emergency departments (ED).

An assessment of the ED service-quality was completed using the Stockport Audit Tool. This was important to ensure the staffing recommendations derived from the data were not perpetuating poor practice standards. The tool is based on six acuity and dependency levels to distinguish between the needs of patients attending the ED. Each acuity and dependency level has an associated descriptor to enable clinical staff to score patients receiving care in their department. These descriptors were developed by expert reference groups during the ED SNCT project.



Other available tools

- Safer Nursing Care Tool (SNCT): Adult Inpatient Wards
- Safer Nursing Care Tool (SNCT): C&YP Inpatient Wards
- Safer Nursing Care Tool (SNCT): Acute Assessment Unit
- Mental Health Optimal Staffing Tool (MHOST)

Data collection exercise

The ED SNCT was developed and validated by NHS emergency department experts.

The ED database included 50 best practice sites with 173,071 recorded interventions (direct care, indirect care) and delivered by ED staff, with a total of 2,032 hours of care observed, and included the responses of up to 9,600 service quality questions.

The tool was formally approved by the Shelford Group Chief Nurses in 2021. The addendum for patients requiring care for 12 hours or more in the emergency department was approved in 2025.



The opportunity

To license the Emergency Department Safer Nursing Care Tool (ED SNCT) please click here: www.innovahealthtec.com

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